

Building Leaders Evaluation

Preliminary frameworks from the IDRC Leadership Development Working Group

IDRC's second strategic objective for 2015-2020 states that IDRC will "build the leaders of today and tomorrow." This objective leads us to think about the people and organizations who undertake the research we fund, as well as those involved in the pathways through which research influences development. At mid-point in this strategic period, the Policy and Evaluation Division is commissioning a cross-program evaluation of selected strategies and results in this broad topic of building leaders.

For more information on the Building Leaders Evaluation, see the study's [concept note](#).

Situating the Study

In scoping the Building Leaders evaluation, POEV built off ideas developed by the IDRC Leadership Development Working Group¹ in 2015. The Working Group identified some common understandings of what building leaders' means and ways in which IDRC programming builds leaders in order to help staff develop more deliberate and intentional approaches, to monitor progress, and to communicate results. They defined a typology of leaders, and developed initial results frameworks for what success looks like when strengthening different types of leaders.

To access all of the Leadership Development Working Group outputs, see their [cover memo](#).

IDRC's approach to building leaders

This evaluation builds on and adds to some of the key ideas about the IDRC' approach to building leaders articulated by the Working Group.

- Leadership is always conceptualized within a trajectory that orients research to development outcomes. So building leaders is part of IDRC's theory of change of how research makes a difference. Leadership is not an end in itself.
- When building leaders, IDRC is very concerned with justice and equity considerations, including gender equity. A focus on building leaders should not exacerbate social exclusion.
- IDRC assumes that results and the efficacy of strategies for those results will be highly context-dependent. Moreover, IDRC support is one of many contributing actors that influence an individual's or organization's leadership trajectory, in addition to their inherent capacities. The evaluation will seek to assess IDRC's contribution bearing in mind that contribution will be partial and must be critically assessed as to whether and to what extent it has been significant.

¹ Chaired by Ann Weston, the Working Group included Program Leader representation from each program area (Bernand Cantin; Cam Do; Laurent Elder (with interim representation by Claire Thompson) and from the Policy and Evaluation Division (Teralynn Ludwick). Joanne Charette and Anindya Chatterjee were involved in early discussions.

Rather than a concise definition, the Working Group proposed a set of key observations in thinking about leaders in the context of IDRC programming

- Leaders build close and trusted relationship to guide others and to deliver on a shared vision or goal;
- Leaders empower individuals and organizations;
- Leaders shape or influence (a science domain; policies; practices);
- Leaders contribute to innovation (products, processes, social practices);
- Leaders are interested in the societal relevance of their work;
- Organizations can be leaders in their field.

These observations are integrated into the further work of the group, including a typology of leaders, a theory of change and a set of progress markers (presented below).

Typology of leaders in Research for Development

The Working Group defined six types of leaders, some of which have since been updated for inclusion in the new Project Approval Document standardized indicators. These definitions were used as the starting point for discussion when scoping the evaluation to determine which categories IDRC staff saw as the most useful or urgent to evaluate.

Type of Leader	Definition
Thought-Leader (established research leader)	A thought-leader is an established research leader who is recognized as an authority in a research field and whose expertise is sought and often rewarded.
Emerging research leader	An emerging research leader is a person who has completed training and some research, usually as part of a PhD or post-doctoral program, or in an early to mid-career position in a university, think tank, research lab, public or private agency. They lead smaller research teams or play an important but secondary role in larger research teams. They display potential to play a stronger role and are beginning to engage with policy makers and practitioners, providing evidence to inform discussions about social, economic, or environmental change processes.
Knowledge brokers or intermediaries	Knowledge brokering fosters knowledge exchange and adoption. It involves bringing people together, helping to build links, identifying gaps and needs, and sharing ideas. It allows information to be used to solve a problem or lead to a better way of doing things. It also includes assisting groups to communicate and understand each other's abilities and needs, and assists with guiding people to sources of research. This may include summarising and synthesising research and policy into easily understood formats and transforming issues into research questions. Knowledge brokering encourages the use of research in planning and implementation and uses evaluation activities to identify successes or improvements.
Transformative Organization	A transformative organization informs policy debates and influences policy development. It commissions studies to inform government services, programming, or policy. It supports network discussions, events, and reports that lead to significant changes in government policy, or community or

	corporate practice. It initiates new strategic partnerships or coalitions for change. It is transformative as a result of IDRC funding.
Entrepreneurs	IDRC is interested in entrepreneurs who commercialize (or help to commercialize) research results. They may also validate research training by providing emerging researchers with work experience i.e. the opportunity to apply their research in a private sector environment. They may operate profit-making research labs.
Research users (policy makers as uptake champions, decision-makers, etc.)	An individual who is a representative of a government (e.g. Minister), holds an established position in the bureaucracy, or is a decision-maker in a public institution (e.g. head of a hospital; head of the chamber of commerce) who collaborates/is engaged in research projects or initiatives in order to champion changes in policy and practice based on evidence of foster an evidence-based culture/environment.

Results framework: progress markers describing the behaviour of leaders in research for development.

The Working Group developed a [theory of change](#) (and accompanying [narrative](#)), and also provided sample illustrative progress markers for each type of leader, which were intended to provide examples of the kind of outcomes that could be expected from individuals or organizations. These will be further developed in the Building Leaders Evaluation. Note that the first two types of leaders in the table below present a continuum, as emerging research leaders become established thought-leaders (so the maximum progress markers for emerging research leaders are the minimum expected for established thought-leaders).

Type of leader	Minimum expected (output level)	Medium level (intermediate outcome)	Maximum level (Impact)
Thought-Leader (established research leader)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Succeed in selection processes (securing grants, academic or policy positions) Secure large amounts of research funding; Mentor emerging researchers; Promote the use of own research results for changes; Become research chair; Publish influential paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keynote speaker at conference; Demonstrated adviser beyond immediate work area-subject; Influential papers published; Publications cited widely; Go to person for advice; invitation to give policy advice to governments; invitations to speak to public sector committees; Initiate strategic partnering efforts; Build constituency or coalition for change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keynote speaker at global policy conference (e.g. Davos); Research used in policy and practice; Become an influential policy maker; Participate in global committees-boards; Recognized public intellectuals; Lead successful strategic partnerships; Lead coalitions that contribute to change
Emerging researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate students are integrated into research projects; Graduate from training (PhD, AIMS etc); Publication in conference proceedings, in peer-reviewed journal; Selected to speak on a panel at a research conference; panellist at conference; Apply for leadership or other training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invited to take a significant role in a research project; Secure (tenured) teaching or other research position in university; Initiate something out of the ordinary; Actively get involved in policy debates; Join coalitions for change; Participate in strategic partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Succeed in selection processes (securing grants, academic or policy positions) Secure large amounts of research funding; Mentor emerging researchers; Promote the use of own research results for changes; Become research chair; Publish influential (academic or policy relevant) paper; Make a particular contribution to a coalition for change
Transformative Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researchers connect with each other regularly to share research findings Using IDRC funds to leverage other resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to global debates Participate in coalitions for change or strategic partnerships Evidence that organization informs policy debates and influences policy development Organizational incentives are in place to keep talent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do commissioned studies to inform government services/programming or policy Network discussions-events-collective reports lead to significant changes in government policy or community or corporate practice

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene public engagement activities to facilitate and share learnings 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate new strategic partnerships or coalitions for change
Entrepreneur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and test social and technological innovations • (Private sector) internships for young entrepreneurs • Support research(ers) whether through providing ideas, access to data, or funding • Engage with policy makers about support they need to do their business? • Providing seed funding, catalysing start ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive additional funding or enter into new partnerships to continue testing • Contribute major funding to research- or field testing or application of research (this goes beyond commissioning research for private good) • Join coalitions or partnerships with the research community to take results to scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invention is scaled (commercialized, re-used, widely adapted) • Researcher becomes a successful entrepreneur/business leader in a global/national company with high revenues • Entrepreneurs work closely with researchers and policymakers in promoting solutions for public good • Lead coalitions or partnerships with researchers to take results to scale
Knowledge Intermediary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and manage networks linking knowledge producers and users • Knowledge of what research/evidence can be used for; Knowledge of who to go to find evidence • Good understanding of key issues in a specific domain • Communicate research to non-specialist audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify emerging/new research needs • Demonstrated reach to key audiences (downloads of content, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authoritative source of information about domain(s) of expertise • Sustained presence in domain(s) of expertise • Innovate in the area of knowledge brokering (e.g. by using IT tools to make information easily accessible; by fostering new and effective ways for users and producers of information to collaborate))
Research users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in fora /initiatives with researchers • Support funding for research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite researchers to present findings at a major policy conference / dialogue • Invite researchers to participate as an expert on advisory groups • Champion changes to policy and practice based on research findings • Publicly reference research • Support increased funding for research to inform policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement changes to policy/legislation or practice based on evidence • Allocate budgets to support new investments around best practices based on evidence • Build an environment conducive to evidence-informed decision-making